

Where the Waters Meet

The place where the slow moving Assabet and Sudbury Rivers meet to form the Concord River offers a quiet, peaceful retreat. Even Concord's famed authors wrote of their appreciation for this tranquil location some 150 years ago. And long before that it was a center of Native American settlement named Musketaquid, the Algonquin word for "a place where the water flows through the grasses." Joined by the Assabet River, or "drinking-water stream," once known as the North River, the three rivers form the River Confluence at the protruding "Egg Rock" formation.

Between Lowell Road and the Sudbury River, the "Old Calf Pasture" was a grazing pasture for Rev. Peter Bulkeley's cattle in the 17th century. The meadow is now part of the River Confluence Conservation area, separated from the rivers by wet woodlands. Abutting the River Confluence to the north and west are the floodplain meadows of Davis Conservation Land and the Concord Land Conservation Trust's (CLCTs) French's Meadow and Sherwood Red Maple Swamp, which protect the River Confluence and maintain a vital floodplain when these peaceful rivers swell from winter snow melt and spring rains.

Location and Access

The River Confluence consists of two sections separated by the Sudbury River: the Old Calf Pasture and Egg Rock Land. A five-minute drive on Main Street connects them as described below.

Access to Old Calf Pasture and to the public boat launch is down a short gravel road from Lowell Road next to the bridge over the Concord River. The trails and boat launch allow exploration of the Confluence by both land and water. There is parking for more than 20 vehicles along Lowell Road at the bridge. Another trail entrance with parking is behind the Water and Sewer Building at 135 Keyes Road.

Access to the Egg Rock Land is from Nashawtuc Road where street parking is available. Walk up Squaw Sachem Trail (private road) off Nashawtuc Road to a trail entrance on the right (between 50 and 80 Squaw Sachem Trail). This trail leads to the abandoned Reformatory Branch Rail Bed and trails to Egg Rock.

Dog Owners: Keep dogs under your control at all times and away from private yards and buildings. It is the duty of each person who owns, possesses, or controls a dog to remove and dispose of any waste left by his or her dog.



Reformatory Branch Railroad Bed



Town of Concord

River Confluence Trail Guide



Egg Rock
Gleason 1899

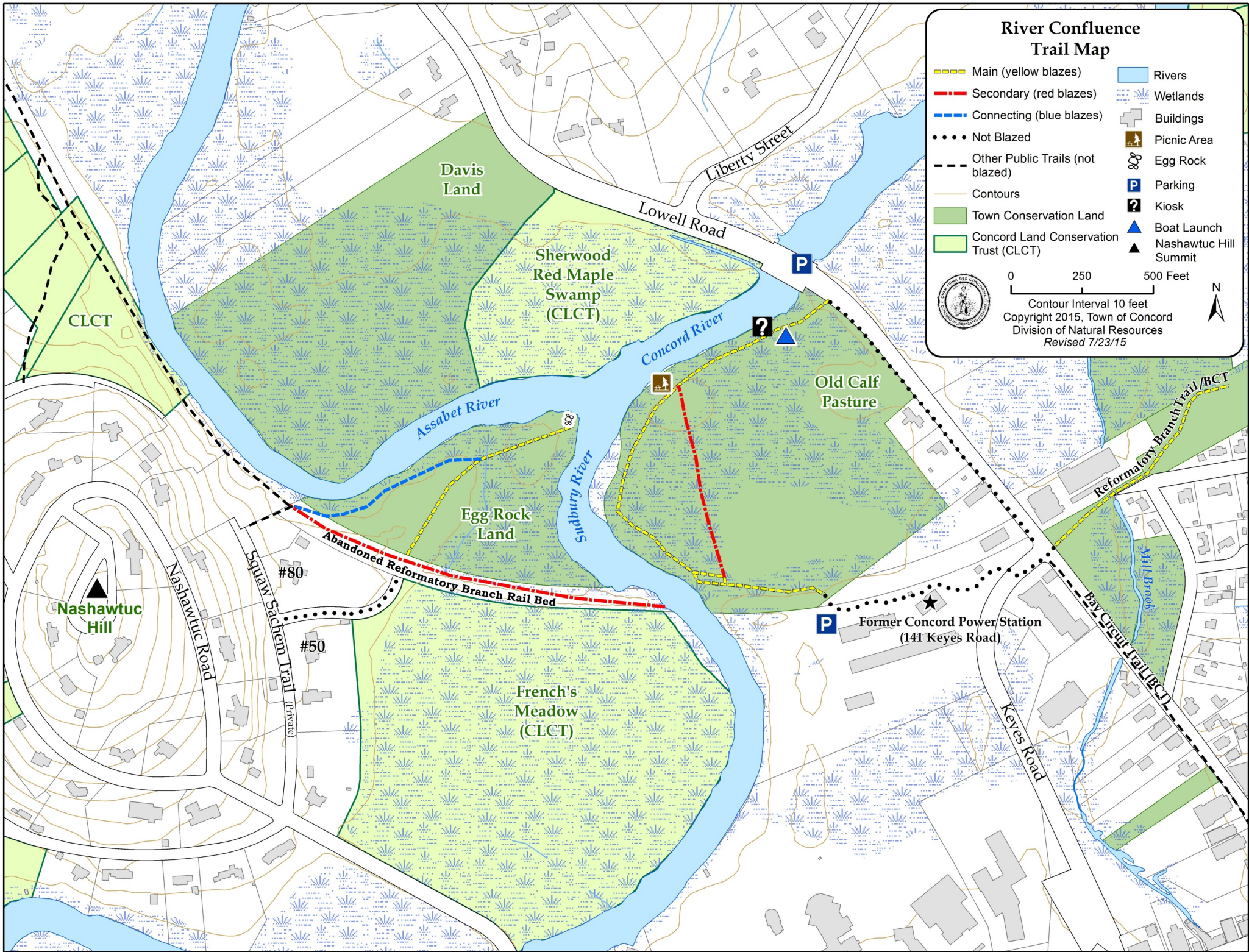
"A more lovely stream than this [Assabet River], for a mile above its junction with the Concord, has never flowed on earth..."

*Nathaniel Hawthorne
Mosses from an Old Manse*



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RIVER CONFLUENCE

Native American History

Before Concord was founded, Nipmuck, Pawtucket, and Massachusetts people inhabited the river basin they called Musketaquid. In the early 1600s, the Sachem (chief) Nanepashemet led tribes over a vast area now known as northern and central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. His people were at war with the Tarrantine (Abenaki) in the 1615 to 1619 time period, causing him to move to Medford. He sent his wife and children still farther inland for safety to the Acton, Littleton and Musketaquid area.

When Nanepashemet was killed in battle, his medicine man, Webbacowet, married his widow as was the custom of Native Americans. Since Nanepashemet's sons were too young to lead, responsibility for his tribes fell to his wife, Squaw Sachem, meaning the woman chief. Webbacowet and Squaw Sachem had a lodge in Musketaquid at Nashawtuc Hill close by the rivers that converge at Egg Rock. The private way off Nashawtuc Road bears tribute to her - Squaw Sachem Trail.

The site Peter Bulkeley, Simon Willard, and the group of Concord founders would come to in 1635 was an old village of the Massachusetts Indians. "Their tribe, once numerous, the epidemic had reduced." (*Ralph Waldo Emerson*) The six miles square of Musketaquid that would become Concord was "traded" by Squaw Sachem to the colonials for items of clothing, tools, and continuing hunting rights.

The Conservation Land

The River Confluence Conservation area is comprised of three separate adjoining parcels

of land acquired by The Town of Concord over a span of 30 years. The original eight-acre Egg Rock property in the point of land between the Assabet and Sudbury Rivers was donated to the town in 1942 through a bequest from Fannie Eleanor Wheeler. The Old Calf Pasture is a 20.8-acre property across the Sudbury River from Egg Rock purchased in 1962 for floodplain protection and one of the first Concord purchases strictly for preservation. The Davis land along the north side of the Assabet and Concord Rivers was acquired by purchase and donation from the Davis family in 1974.

In the 1980s, some consideration was being given to upstream tapping of the Concord River, along the Sudbury River, for water to serve the MWRA District. Fearing harm to the delicate ecological balance from reduced water flow, a campaign was organized to protect the rivers from this and all other developmental threats. As a result, the Concord, Sudbury, and most of the Assabet rivers were designated by the Federal government on April 9, 1999 as Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Suggested Walks

Old Calf Pasture Confluence Loop

From the dirt road to the Concord River boat launch off Lowell Road, a sidewalk along Lowell Road heads toward Concord Center passing the Old Calf Pasture on the right. A right turn into Keyes Road and another right beyond 141 Keyes Road leads to the town vehicle parking lot. A yellow blazed trail up the abandoned Reformatory Branch rail line embankment beside the parking lot turns left to the Sudbury River. From there the main trail of the River Confluence heads to the

right along the Sudbury and Concord Rivers back to the boat launch. **Old Calf Pasture trails are flooded and impassable at times of high water.** Walking time 20 minutes.

Reformatory Branch Rail Line and Egg Rock

The main trail to Egg Rock from Squaw Sachem Trail is intersected by the continuation of the abandoned Reformatory Branch rail bed that once crossed from the Old Calf Pasture west to the Egg Rock Land on a bridge that no longer exists over the Sudbury River. A walk east on the rail bed ends at the Sudbury River and west along the Assabet River to Simon Willard Woods (CLCT) with scenic views of the river. Walking time 25 minutes.

Continuing straight on the main trail leads to Egg Rock with a possible return along a connecting trail beside the Assabet River, followed by a left turn on the Reformatory Branch trail back to the junction with the main trail. **Egg Rock trails are flooded and impassable at times of high water.** Walking time 10 minutes.

Points of Interest

Old Calf Pasture

The Old Calf Pasture located along Lowell Road beside the Sudbury and Concord Rivers, is today a buffer from development of the confluence and a reminder of just how close to the town center grazing and other agricultural activities were in earlier years. It is believed that the area has been open meadow or pasture land since before Concord existed. In the seventeenth century, when the town was first settled, it was the "calf pasture" of its minister, the Rev. Peter Bulkeley.



Old Calf Pasture

In 1879 when the Middlesex Central Railroad extended its right-of-way west from Lowell Road to the State Prison, to build the Reformatory Branch rail line, it took a strip of the old pasture along the southern edge. At the turn of the 20th century the area north of the railroad developed into more of a recreational area, for walking, picnicking, and boating. At that time the Concord Canoe Club built a boathouse, now gone, in the southwest corner of the meadow next to the railroad.

The public boat launch by the Lowell Road bridge was for many years been the site of the annual Musketaquid Earth Day Riverfest ceremony, recently relocated down stream to the lawn of The Old Manse on Monument Street.

Concord Power Station

South of the railroad bed, the original Calf Pasture land was developed for municipal facilities. The Federal Revival style brick building at 141 Keyes Road, now home to the Department of Planning and Land Management offices, was built in 1899 as the combined electricity-generating and sewage pumping station for Concord. Electrical service began February 2, 1900. The sewage pumping facility never operated as well as planned and was eventually replaced with pumps installed in the small brick building next to the railroad bed. The coal-fired power station received coal by shipment on

the Reformatory Branch rail line.

Marshland Habitat

The River Confluence contains broad lowlands that serve to accept floodwaters during times of high water. The wet marshland supports a variety of plant life that in season appears as a triple band along the river's edge. First is a prominent wall of Purple Loosestrife, an invasive species introduced from Europe before 1860, which takes its name from Lysimachos, a Greek king who was successful in ending strife. Farther back from the water's edge is white Watersmart and beyond that a band of blue Pickerelweed.



Egg Rock Inscription

Egg Rock

The rock feature where the Sudbury and Assabet Rivers flow together to form the Concord River rests on bedrock that is seasonally an island in times of high water and thought to be egg-shaped. Some believe the rock itself resembles an egg when viewed from certain perspectives. In 1885, for the 250th anniversary of the 1635 founding of Concord, tribute was paid to the Native Americans with an inscription chiseled into the face of Egg Rock at the river's edge: "On the hill Nashawtuck at the meeting of the rivers and along the banks lived the Indian owners of Musketaquid before the white men came".

In the mid-1800s, writers Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson enjoyed sitting at the rock. Daniel Chester French, who created the Minuteman Statue for the Old North Bridge and the Seated Lincoln for the Washington Lincoln monument, sometimes came here to enjoy breakfast. Thoreau would survey the area in 1856 and 1857, including the locations of Egg Rock and Nashawtuc Hill 500 meters to the southwest.

Clearing of the surrounding woodlands and the building of the Reformatory Branch rail line in the late 1800s disrupted the pristine atmosphere of Egg Rock Land. But by the beginning of the 21st century, the railroad long since abandoned and the forest growth recovered, the area had returned to a more natural state.

Nashawtuc Hill

Nashawtuc Hill is a glacial drumlin that rises 250 feet above the Sudbury and Assabet Rivers. The name is Algonquin meaning "hill between the rivers". At the time of colonial settlement, it was the dwelling place of the remaining Native American population that had been reduced as much as 90% by war, low birth rate, and the epidemics of 1617 and 1633. The hill was an ideal campsite with height for surveillance and nearby sources of food and water. The first European to join the Native Americans on the hill was Simon Willard who chose the location for convenience of trading with them. He was present with Rev. Peter Bulkeley at the negotiation of the town's founding. A trace of him remains in the naming of Simon Willard Road atop the hill.



Egg Rock